

Intentism

Resurrection of the Artist

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*Resurrection of the
Artist*

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Intentionism *noun* \\in-'tentizəm\\

Intentionism is a movement of artists, authors and musicians who believe that art **can** convey an artist's intended message to his or her intended audience. As a movement it both recognizes and celebrates the relationship between an artist's creation and its creator.

Since the 1920s, a certain view regarding meaning in art has dominated the Anglo-American universities and became almost dogma. This viewpoint insists that works of art should primarily be understood by how minds receive them rather than by the psychology that created them. Such an understanding of meaning in art essentially relegates the artist to just another interpreter of his or her own artwork. For this reason Roland Barthes famously proclaimed 'the death of the author'.

To refer to the artist's intention was to naively refer to the unknowable and to place unnecessary limitations on the wealth of possible readings of the artwork. Intention was seen to stifle the work. Adrian Searle in the Guardian once referred to Tony Cragg's sculptures by enthusing, 'Finally freed from the artist's ideas and fantasies of intention, all the conceits that made its existence possible, including the fundamental act of making, the work floats freely, emerging from a kind of blindness' (1).

In contrast, a group of artists have surfaced who share the belief that the author is alive and well and able to communicate their intended meaning to their intended audience with a degree of accuracy sufficient for them to be pioneers in society, helping to shape what will be, rather than merely documenters of society, recording what is and was. We believe that to consider the artist's role as anything less is to effectively gag the artist, or simply drown the artist's intended meaning in a cacophony of conflicting interpretations. We have become known as Intentists and we claim that 'All meaning is simply the imperfect outworking of

intention.'

What follows is a brief outline of this position and its importance.

A: What is intention?

At the heart of Intentionism lies a particular understanding of the role of 'intention' in the process and understanding of art and literature. In fact, for Intentionists, artwork cannot have any meaning divorced from realised or accomplished intention. In order to better understand the role of intention we shall first seek to define it according to what it is and is not, beginning with the latter. So firstly, what is intention not?

1. Intention is not always conscious. For example, when the phone rings my intention to answer it is not always a conscious one. (2).
2. Intention is not simply belief. I may believe I will fail my driving test without intending to.
3. Intention is not a plan. I can think of a plan without intending on using it.
4. Intention is not wishing or longing since these things may be out of reach and not intended.

So then, what *is* intention?

Donald Davidson speaks of the 'primary reason' of intention; that the intender has a 'performance expectation' (3). If Davidson's performance meets his expectations then the work would have the aforementioned realised intention. It is the

interplay between an artist's expectation and performance that characterises artistic creativity from conception to the finished work.

The stages of intention within the creative and critical process can be summarised in the following five headings:

1. The artist intends something.

By this we mean that the artist has a creative mental 'surge' with a performance expectation which can be sometimes so fast that it can feel instinctive, for example when playing free-form jazz, or can seem to evolve in a measured logical way. Either way this creative mental surge contains the seeds of meaning for all meaning in art or anything else is simply the imperfect outworking of intention.

Our intentions, as stated above, can be conscious, subconscious and even unconscious. Therefore, an artist's work may include many unconscious influences such as instinct and habit. If the influences were permitted into the art-making process, then they are bound up in intention. The opposite of an intended action is not an unconscious action, but an accident. Even artistic accidents, when allowed to remain, have been intentionally incorporated into the end product and so have their meaning governed by the artist's intention (4).

2. The artist acts on his/her intention modifying it as he works.

The artist, seeking to realise the intention, will continually alter their performance expectation where it seems fit. Even if the artist begins by free association, there normally will follow an intentional time of evaluation and editing.

3. The artist finishes when he/her intends to.

If intention has no place in the termination of works of art, how is it possible to know when a work is finished? Surely a work is only finished when the artist decides it is so. The artist chooses to refrain from doing any more, either by quitting and leaving the work unfinished and intention unrealised or because the work has fulfilled his/her intentions. When an artist dies in the midst of some creative purpose it is normally assumed that the work is unfinished, since the action of creativity was not terminated by the artist's intention.

4. The critic seeks to understand the meaning of the work through the 'realised' intentions of the artist.

The meaning of the work relates only to the artist's realised intentions, which is the finished work. Yet in order to understand the realised intention, the intention process of the artist needs to be recognised.

5. The critic assesses the

appropriateness of the intention.

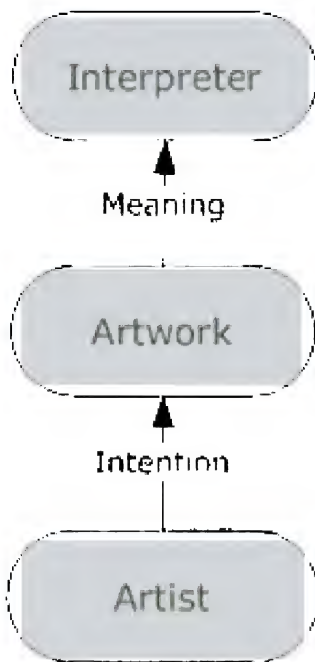
The merit of an artwork is to be found both in the value of the intention when realised, and how well the intention was realised. In 1878, Whistler took John Ruskin to court over a review that his 'Nocturnes' were 'slapdash, unfinished, they look like work in progress rather than finished paintings' (5). One of Whistler's defenders, William Michael Rossetti (the brother of Dante Gabriel Rossetti), took notes on the trial and said that the art critic should always bear in mind the artist's intentions. Whether the artist successfully fulfils these intentions may be difficult to ascertain but is the domain of the critic. However, Rossetti continued that Whistler's work was 'justified to itself by adequately and exquisitely fulfilling its own condition... Whistler produces the exact result he is aiming at' (6). Rossetti was right in reminding Ruskin that any appraisal of artwork that fails to take into account artistic intention can be validly accused of 'missing the point'. He does, however, provide a 'get out clause' for the artist if the chief test of the merit of an artwork were how well the intention was realised, since the artist can simply form his intention around what he has already done. It is the job of the critic to critique the artwork as realised intention with a bias towards ambition. A meagre intention almost perfectly realised ought never to outweigh a majestic intention sketchily realised.

B: Three Models for understanding intention and meaning in art

In order to better understand the relationships between artist and artwork and intention and meaning we shall consider three models: the traditional model, the postmodern model and the Intentionalist model. The models can be viewed in terms of a chronological evolution in how art is understood.

Brief explanation of the Traditional model

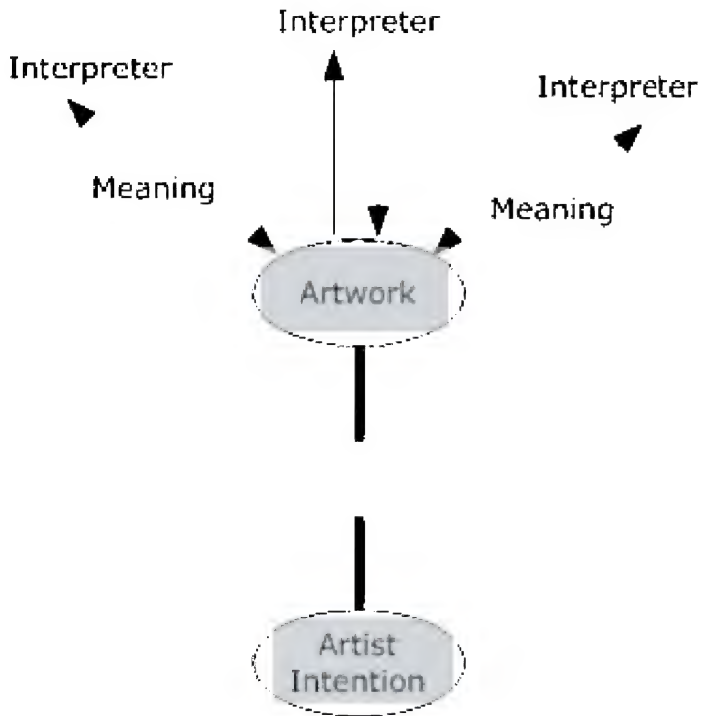
The model below represents a linear understanding of how the meaning of artwork is conveyed and understood. The artist thinks of an idea (intention), goes to work and makes his idea a reality (artwork = realised intention) and the meaning of the artwork can be 'passively received' and understood by the interpreter by studying the artwork and to a lesser degree the artist. This model dominated our understanding of art for thousands of years until the last two centuries and because it is linear and almost mathematical, it differs little from the Modernist model.



Brief explanation of the Postmodern model

The traditional model seemed inadequate once Post-modernist thought explored how individuals and communities engage differently with the 'vocabulary' of signs and the structural 'grammar' of the artwork. The model below illustrates three key issues in the Postmodern understanding of meaning in art. Firstly, advocates of this model believe it is impossible to discover the artist's intention via the artwork. The author is dead because it is the artwork that speaks to us rather than the artist. A broken bridge between artist intention and artwork illustrates this concept.

Secondly, the process of finding meaning is found through dialogue between the artwork and the interpreter. Thirdly, the artist becomes simply another interpreter of his/her own work since the meaning of the artwork is not connected to intention.



For Intentists, the Postmodern conclusion that it is impossible to discover the artist's intention via the artwork is right at the heart of the problem with this model. Of course, there are complications in viewing a work through the intentions of the artist but artistic intent is not as elusive as some would suggest and especially not to the intended audience. When we are in everyday conversation we habitually know our interlocutor's intention without asking for clarification, indeed we become so adept at recognising what

others intend their words to mean that misunderstanding surprises us. Historians often consider the bias of the author when analysing written accounts. In order to do so, they need to be able to recognise the intended meaning of phrases sometimes written in the distant past, however imperfectly interpreted. Richard Wollheim, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy, University of California puts it this way 'why if in our everyday lives we believe we can grasp the intentions of others, why should we think...the intentions of artists, the psychological factors that motivate them, have a peculiar elusiveness...people have no hesitation in writing military history, in which they talk about the intentions of generals, when of course generals, by their very nature, are totally committed to concealment of their intentions. But nevertheless, the idea persists about artists' (7).

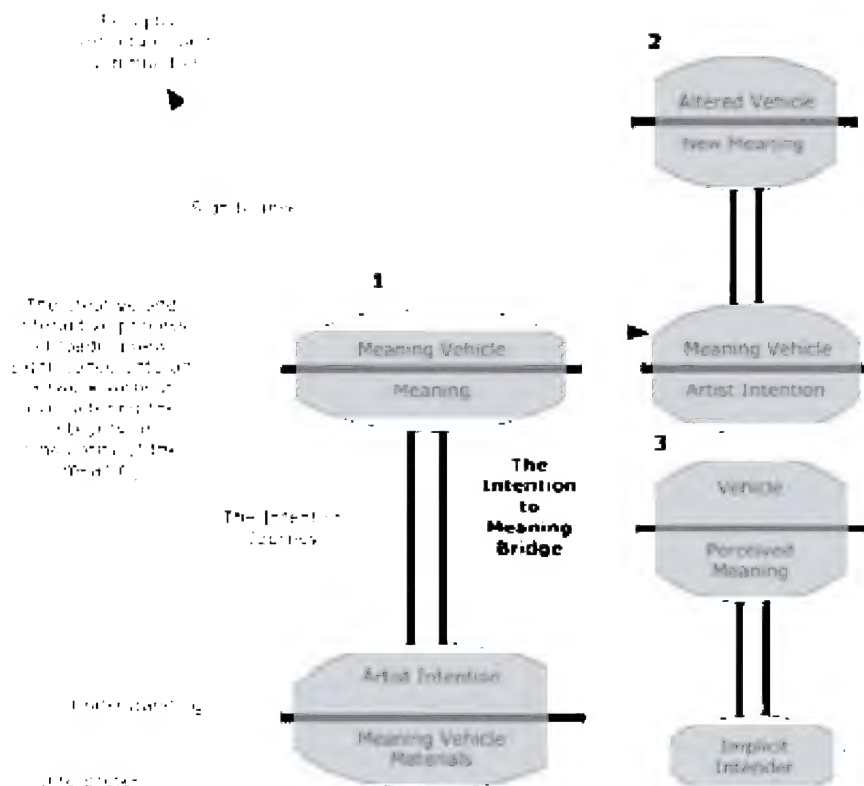
There are several ways an observer can seek an artist's intention. These include:

- A. Interpreting the work through sketches that preceded it.
- B. Reading any notes or communication on the work
- C. Placing the work in the artist's oeuvre and using this to compare ideas and artistic progression.
- D. Seeing the work in the setting of its genre.

In sum, artist intention is not elusive. Even if it were sometimes difficult, a critic would be irresponsible to conclude that artist's intention is irrelevant in interpreting a work. As we shall see from the Intentionist model below, intention is both integral to meaning and key to appraisal.

Brief explanation of Intentist model

The diagram below represents a number of different scenarios.



Although the phrase 'intended meaning' has been used above in order to differentiate between the Post-modern view of 'meaning through dialogue' and the what the artist intended the work to mean, Intentists believe that all meaning is intended meaning. Sever the connection between intention and meaning and all meaning is lost. In the past, ancient hieroglyphics were meaningless forms until their intended purpose was discovered. The intention journey that took the artist from an idea to finished artwork was across a bridge that must remain unbreakable.

Meaning and significance

It is the belief of Intentists that there has been a serious misunderstanding of the terms 'meaning' and 'significance' in art criticism. Director of the National Gallery Nicholas Penny, in conversation with Jonathon Jones of the *Guardian* (27 March 2008) said paintings that survive for centuries change their meaning again and again. This is a common understanding, but can this use of 'meaning' stand up to rigorous analysis?

Case Studies

In 1960 the photographer Alberto Korda took a photo of Marxist revolutionary Che Guevara. Korda had an original intention for the artwork and realised it in the photograph.



Photograph of Che Guevara was taken on March 5, 1960 by Alberto Korda at a funeral service for victims of the La Coubre explosion.

Since then, the photo has reached iconographic status and has come to represent many different things such as 'revolution', 'justice' and even 'coolness' amongst teenage students. Are these associations new meanings of the original photograph unintended by the original artist?

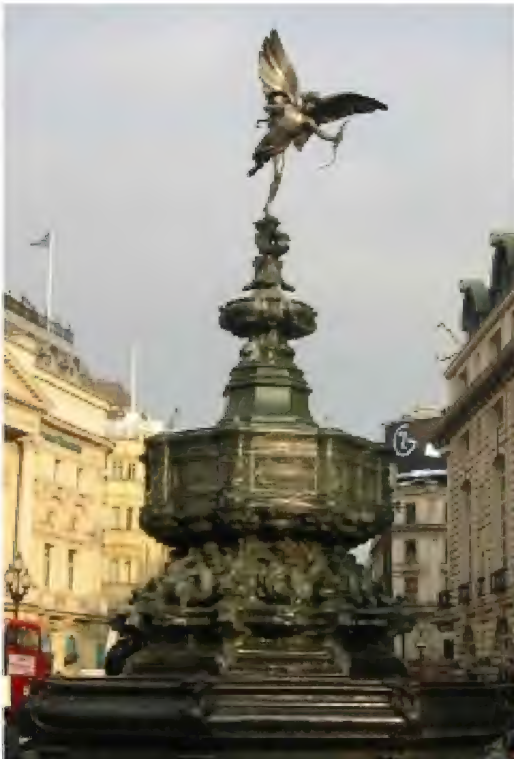


In the case of the Che Guevara image two different processes have

taken place, graphically represented at the top left (1) and top right (2) of the Intentionism model. Firstly, as we see from the top left of the diagram, people can appropriate an artwork and thereby give the artwork a new 'significance' (not a new meaning). The distinction between 'significance' and 'meaning' is an important one and it is a misunderstanding of the difference between the two that led to the erroneous Postmodern concept of 'meaning through dialogue'. The person who creates the artwork is responsible for the meaning, not the one who 'receives' it. Yet the receiver can choose to attribute a certain significance to the artwork. This significance can be personal, one of many 'significances' and can even be in conflict with the meaning, but should never be termed a 'new meaning'. In this way individuals and communities chose to give Korda's photograph a new significance. Secondly (as represented in the top right of the diagram), the original photograph was adapted by Jim Fitzpatrick in 1967 in order to

create the heavily stylised posters with the red background that often featured on teenage students' bedroom walls in the 1970s. Fitzpatrick took the artwork and used it to realise a new artistic intention, thereby creating a new artwork based upon a previous artwork. Another similar example is the alteration of the Mona Lisa by Duchamp. The intention of the new artwork is different and therefore the meaning is different. There can be no new meaning without a new realised intention such as Fitzpatrick's.

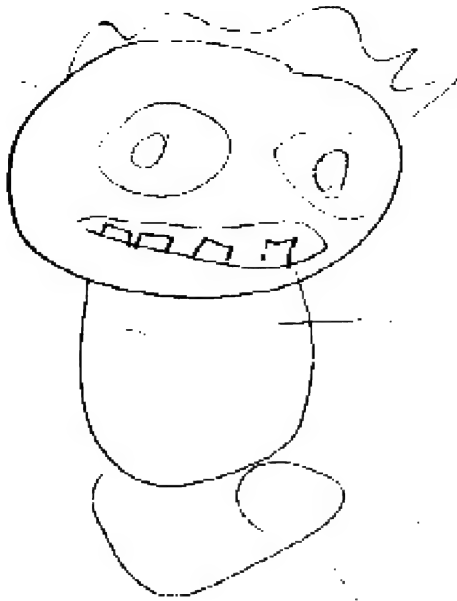
Another example would be the well-known statue in Piccadilly Circus, London.



Shaftesbury Memorial, Piccadilly Circus by Alfred Gilbert, 1885

What does the sculpture depict? It is popularly known as Eros. Some people believe it to be The Angel of Christian Charity. Yet what was the original commission? Artist Alfred Gilbert intended the figure to be Anteros, the Greek god of requited love. The sculptor was intended to symbolise the selfless philanthropic love of the Earl of Shaftesbury for the poor and this is what it means today. This case study illustrates that even if the majority assumes a position contrary to the artist's intention, this position is still a significance or association, the meaning does not change.

Note also that the artwork is not the meaning, but rather the vehicle for the meaning. The artwork only means something because the artist intended it to. The illustration below is of a child's drawing. The child intends to draw a family member. Even though the outcome looks more like a monster or an insect, it still depicts what the child intended. Only the quality of the vehicle, the work, is poor. As the artist grows up no doubt the vehicle will become more successful.



Equally words are not the meaning but can be used by an intender to carry meaning. This applies also to individual words. Swiss linguist Saussure believed that a word and its meaning is arbitrary. For example, the word 'pen' has no intrinsic relevance to a pen. We understand a word by understanding the intention of the speaker's choice of sounds. When a dictionary states that a particular word has five meanings it reads as though the word itself has five intrinsic meanings without needing an intender. In fact, the writers of the dictionary are stating that people generally intend this combination of letters to mean five different things. Dictionaries are only as accurate in as far as their definitions conform to the use of the words within a context and by an intender with a specific intention. When a dictionary states that a word has five meanings, it is similar to when a journalist states that 'a criminal has been captured.' The journalist uses the verb in

the passive voice so that person who did the capturing is not mentioned. They could instead state that someone captured a criminal but we all know that someone had to do the capturing. In the same way when a dictionary writer gives a meaning there is an implicit intender that is not mentioned, probably the English speaking public (see part 3 of the diagram). To avoid confusion it would be more accurate if dictionaries stated that one spelling represents five words rather than one word has five meanings. Homonyms like 'nail' (a metal fastener or fingernail) have two totally different meanings even though the spelling and pronunciation are identical and ought not to be considered the same word.

The implicit intender is used when archaeologists find ancient drawings in a cave. How do we know that crude scratches are not arbitrary marks made by the weather or accidental? How do we know that they are intentional? The observer perceives a meaning and therefore an implicit intender. Often the implicit intender is simply ourselves and we interpret the intender to have the same intentions we would have if we had created the same end result.

Summary of the Key points of the Intentionalist model

1. It is an evolution of the Post-modern model, not its rejection.
2. It restores the unbreakable link between meaning and artist intention: all meaning is realised intent, meaning is the imperfect outworking of intention
3. It replaces 'finding meaning through dialogue' (from the postmodern model) with 'loading significance'
4. It sees the interpreter's role of understanding the meaning as to

recreate the intention journey, however imperfectly.

5. It states that the artist is able to communicate their intended meaning to their intended audience with a degree of accuracy sufficient for them to be a pioneer in society and to have a certain degree of responsibility for the effect of the artwork on society.

C: Beardsley's Three Objections

Beardsley and Wimsatt wrote the seminal paper on the subject of intention 'The intentional Fallacy'. (1946 rev. 1954) Beardsley's key arguments against a link between intention and meaning are set out in an essay published in the book 'Intention and Interpretation' (8). They represent three important objections that Beardsley believed proved the link to be a fallacy. Let us deal with them one at a time.

1. *'Some texts that have been formed without the agency of an author, and hence, without authorial meaning, nevertheless have a meaning and can be interpreted. For example, certain kinds of verbal mistake.'*(9) He uses the example of when Hart Crane wrote 'Thy Nazarene and tender eyes,' a printer's error transformed it into 'Thy Nazarene and tinder eyes', but Crane let the accidental version stand.

Here Crane simply preferred the serendipity of the printer error. (The very fact that Beardsley can label it a 'mistake' means that the text is judged by the author's original intention.) It is similar to the printer suggesting a word change and Crane considering what people would intend the altered phrase to mean and liking it enough to keep it. The only difference in this case is that the word change is accidental. When Crane decides to let the accidental

version stand he is intentionally incorporating the phrase into his work and therefore intending it to mean something.

2. *'The meaning of a text can change after its author has died. But the author cannot change his meaning after he has died. Therefore, the textual meaning is not identical to the authorial meaning. The OED furnishes abundant evidence that individual words and idioms acquire new meanings and lose old meanings as time passes.'* (10)

Here Beardsley wrongly assumes that the meaning of a text can change. Once the writer's intention is realised and the text finished then the meaning of the text cannot change and it does not matter whether the author is alive or dead. The author cannot alter the meaning of the text without altering the text. The authorial meaning and the textual meaning are one and the same. Furthermore, Beardsley displays a serious misunderstanding of how words develop by suggesting that words acquire new meanings independent of their use. Surely, the only reason words acquire new meanings is if they are used by people in a new way with a new intention. Words would never acquire new meanings in a vacuum. The OED is simply recording how one word has been used with different intentions over the years.

This is the same problem that was addressed earlier regarding National Gallery Director, Nicholas Penny and art. German philosopher Gadamer spoke of this as 'eine Wirkungsgeschichte' or 'effective history' (11); how a painting might be involved in all sorts of events that change people's associations of it. Yet, surely, when the artist finishes the work, the work has all of its determinate artistic properties at that time? As philosopher Livingston points out '...an event, once past, cannot acquire new non-epistemic properties' (12). If a painting is constantly changing

its meaning, then we can never really know what a painting ever means.

Furthermore, a later work does not change an earlier one. One reads later paintings in the light of earlier ones, not the other way round. What can change, is a person's associations with a work. Intentionism agrees with ED Hirsch who speaks of this as the work changing significance (13). Our conditioning and socio-political environment can make us perceive some aspects of an artwork more sensitively yet be unaware of other aspects but it cannot alter the artwork itself. When the Nazis attributed degeneracy to certain modernist pictures they effectively attributed a degenerate significance to the art without changing the meaning of the work. If a painting can endlessly change its meaning then we cannot argue against Nazi art criticism. Our art could become defenseless against future art critics imposing their own meanings then being both judge and executioner.

3. *'A text can have meanings that its author is not aware of. Therefore, it can have meanings that its author did not intend. Therefore, textual meaning is not identical to authorial meaning'* (14)

Here we find a further example of the common misunderstanding of the difference between 'meaning' and 'significance'. Texts cannot have meanings that its author is not aware of, but texts can have a number of significances to different individuals and communities. The meaning of a text is limited to the magnitude of the author's intentions, but the significance of the text is potentially unlimited. When Martin Luther King said, 'I have a dream', his intended meaning, the only meaning for those words, majestic though they are, was limited to the context and purpose of his speech. The significance of those words to African Americans, to oppressed people with aspirations everywhere, in

fact to many who have never read the speech and so are unaware of the context is far greater than the meaning.

In practice academics almost always refer to the link between the author's intention and the meaning of a text when they disagree with a critic. Logically, it is impossible to disagree with written viewpoint of a critic unless you believe that the intention of the author is linked to the meaning of his or her writing. Such a critic should not write, 'Johnson is incorrect in his view of...' or even 'Johnson in his book is incorrect' but should write, 'the book is incorrect and of the author I have no idea'.

D: Conclusion- Intentionism is a force for good

When someone speaks, or when an artist creates, who decides what he or she means? Is the speaker able to communicate or is the listener free to interpret what is said in other ways? Intentionism is a movement that deals with such a fundamental issue. Should we be content to let our words and actions be interpreted as a listener sees fit? It is hoped that a reader of this essay would first understand the intention of the arguments before deciding to accept or reject them. How can an artist receive due credit for his work if the artist has died? How can an artist who denies the centrality of intention or a philosopher who accepts the author's demise receive commendation without being inconsistent with their thinking?

Conversely, Intentionists believe that removing the centrality of intention from communication invariably leads to the break down of accountability. Can an artist, for example, the Jamaican reggae singer 'Bounty Killer', known for including death threats to homosexuals in his lyrics, be accountable for the impact of his work on society? Are the critics reading homophobia into the work or is there discernable intent that is morally obnoxious?

Perhaps the most famous incident which concerns intention and

accountability relates to Paul de Man. Paul de Man worked in the deconstructive movement. In 1987 the New York Times under the title 'Yale Scholar's Articles found in Nazi Paper,' published an article that looked to 170 articles written by de Man between 1940 and 1942 that contained anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi sentiments. The problem is that if we accept the Barthes 'death of the author' we are unable to hold de Man accountable. Sean Burke in his work 'The Death and Return of the Author (p5) says, ' On this issue, theory seems to abandon or suspend the idea that the author is a mere fiction or trace of language, for if authorship were indeed a textual illusion, there would be no charge to answer beyond that of reminding the world that in the reality of text 'Paul de Man' signs and signifies nothing.' Yet, as Burke says, ' So much in itself confirms that, firstly, the signature 'Paul de Man' is something greatly in excess of a textual effect and secondly, his signature ties de Man ethically and existentially to the texts he has written.' (14)

Intentism grew from like-minded artists who knew that the author and artist are alive and well and can act as pioneers, creating art that stretches human imagination and initiates aesthetic and moral debate of social benefit. They believe that far from being a regressive reaction to postmodernism, Intentism is a small part of what happens next.

Intentism passionately believes in freedom in debate without fear of our intentions being censored. Log on to www.intentism.com to view our manifesto.

If you agree or disagree with anything in this article please join in the debates on the site. (You would need to log on but need not join as an Intentist).

Note: The first Intentist art exhibition will be held in London in 2009.

Recommended reading

Livingston, Paisley. 2005. *Art and Intention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Notes

1) Furlon, William (editor). 1995. *The Dynamics of Now*, (Tate Gallery Pub Ltd), 108

2) World-renowned hand surgeon Dr. Paul Brand speaks of a bravura piano performance such as that by Rubinstein. Having made the point that the pianist is intentionally reciting the work he insists that much of his or her intentions are not conscious. 'From my own careful calculations I know that some of the movements required, such as the powerful arpeggios in Moonlight's third movement, are simply too fast for the body to accomplish consciously.' Yancey, Philip and Brand, Paul. 1980. *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*. (Zondervan Publishing House) 162

3) Mele, Alfred R. 1992. *Springs of Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 141

4) See Sextus Empiricus' story of the happy accident of the artist Apelles of Kolophon in the Preface of Livingston, Paisley. 2005. *Art and Intention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), vii

5) Furlon, William (editor). 1995. *The Dynamics of Now*, (Tate Gallery Pub Ltd) 95

6) Ibid

7) Ibid, 152

8) Iseminger, Gary (editor). 1992. *Intention and Interpretation* (Temple University Press), 25-27

9) Ibid 25

10) Ibid 26

11) Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1960. Truth and Method (Tubingen), 299-300

12) Livingston, Paisley. 2005. *Art and Intention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 93

13) Hirsch, Edward D Jr. 1967. *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press)

14) Iseminger, Gary (editor). 1992. *Intention and Interpretation* (Temple University Press), 26-27

15) Burke, Sean. 1992. *The Death and Return of the Author* (Edinburgh University Press), 5

Manifesto

Intentists believe 3 principles:

1.

Intentists believe that the artist is free to convey his or her intended message. Intentists believe that European postmodernism is an attempt to gag the artist.

Eminent poststructuralist Jacques Derrida, seen as a champion of Postmodernism, believes intention, "...will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and the entire system of utterances." For Derrida's postmodern followers this means that there must **ALWAYS** be more than one interpretation of any text or work. Intention will **NEVER** be completely present. There will **ALWAYS** be undecidables.

Intentism believes in **UNGAGGING** the artist so that he or she can speak to us.

Picture George W. Bush buying an imaginary Banksy which powerfully depicts the injustice of the Iraq War. Bush thinks it is a nice picture supporting his foreign policy. We think George Bush

does not understand the *meaning* of the artwork.

Who is right?

Postmodernism thinks that the artwork has no universal meaning and can therefore say many things. Meaning rests with the interpreter rather than the artist. If this is true, then the work can mean anything and therefore, effectively mean nothing.

The artist has been gagged.

Postmodernism encourages the belief that no artist or author is able to convey his or her intended meaning because everyone must experience art through their limited frame or reference. Semiotician and social theorist Roland Barthes wrote of '*The Death of the Author*' because, in his eyes, the author's intention is irrelevant. "*To give a text an Author...is to impose a limit on that text.*"

Intentists call this the **GAGGING** of the artist because the artist is very much alive and has a message to say.

2.

Intentists believe a confused, hidden or denied intention leads to ZERO accountability.

This is bad for art and bad for society.

A dead artist can no longer be associated with a painting advocating racism or homophobia, for example. Both Heidegger and Paul De Man have been rightly criticized for writing anti-Semitic articles, which is hypocritical unless an artist's voice can be heard and recognized.

3.

*Conversely, Intentists believe that an omission of artist intention can lead to enforced **restrictions** on the artist and even censorship.*

When the *Contemporary Art Museum* in Cincinnati, opened the art exhibition *The Perfect Moment* in 1990, the city of Cincinnati brought suit against the Centre and two curators as some of the work was considered offensive. The prosecution only showed the work, the defense explained possible artistic intention. The jury acquitted all the accused.

Art has been at the vanguard of changing social behaviour, often encouraging tolerance and civil liberties. Art has often been one step ahead of society in attitudes towards women, race and politics, acting as a social conscience in times of oppression.

The potency of art to speak to the hearts and minds of people is not doubted by dictators who are often keen to silence its voice.

Without the influence of art with a message civilization will be that much more brutal, that much more intolerant.

Intentists believe that although their artwork can have a complex meaning and be understood on a number of levels,

there are definitely ways it can be misunderstood - therefore not all interpretations are equally valid.

Intentists believe that their artwork is able to convey their artistic intention to their intended audience.

Intentists believe that the voice of their work is a force for good.

Vittorio Pelosi is a practicing artist and is one of the founding members of Intentism.

Can an artist influence the way people see the world? Can artists be a force for good? Are artist's free to show their ideas? Much of postmodernism says no. The meaning of a work is separate from the artist's intentions. If we want to know what a work is about, don't ask the artist.

The artist is dead.

The critic is free to judge the work to mean whatever he or she wants.

Intentism is a new art movement that has had enough of this intellectually suspect morally questionable thinking. Although

many books have come out against 'the death of the author' regarding literature, art schools and artists have been left to work under this delusion.

Intentists believe that the author is alive and well and able to communicate their intended meaning to their intended audience with a degree of accuracy sufficient for them to be pioneers in society, helping to shape what will be, rather than merely documenters of society, recording what is and was.

We believe that to consider the artist's role as anything less is to effectively gag the artist, or simply drown the artist's intended meaning in a cacophony of conflicting interpretations. We have become known as Intentists and we claim that 'All meaning is simply the imperfect outworking of intention.'

Intentism is a movement of artists, authors and musicians who believe that art can convey an artist's intended message to his or her intended audience. As a movement it both recognizes and celebrates the relationship between an artist's creation and its creator.

Intentists believe this is a cause to fight for. When someone speaks, or when an artist creates, who decides what he or she means? Is the speaker able to communicate or is the listener free to interpret what is said in other ways? Should we be content to let our words and actions be interpreted as a listener sees fit?

The state of the world is surely such, that there has never been a more important time to fight for the ability to speak, to be able to effect the world in which we live.